

All about The Clothing Exchange Agents



Thank you for your interest in becoming an agent for The Clothing Exchange. Our agents are special people, they are central to our success and very important to us. I hope that the information provided here gives you a better idea of what being an agent can mean but if you have any further questions please do give us a call and we'll try to answer them. Happy reading, we hope you can join us.

Some Background Info

The Clothing Exchange enables parents to buy quality, affordable, preowned children's clothing and maternity wear in child friendly and sociable environments. Whether at a party, a playgroup, through a local agent or online there are options to suit everyone.

Supported by an UnLtd award, The Clothing Exchange was started in 2008 by Sara Marsh, a Cornish based mum fed up with working 9 - 5. Looking for a work life that could fit better around family commitments it was a comment made by her sister that sparked the idea. After seeing her niece dressed in the latest charity shop finds, Auntie Clare remarked 'Why can't I ever find stuff like that?'

With **reuse** at the core of Sara's beliefs she worked closely with a number of parents and interested groups to find out what it was that parents (mainly mums) wanted, The Clothing Exchange is the result of that.

The Clothing Exchange is not just about reuse, it is about providing flexible **work** opportunities for parents, work that they can fit around their families. It's about contributing to the **local economy** and about providing a **rural retail** service. But more than this, The Clothing Exchange is about making shopping more **fun**, after all we work hard enough earning the money, we should enjoy spending it.

Starting in Cornwall, the longer term plans are to expand the business so that communities throughout the South West and the rest of the UK can also benefit. Our aim is to establish The Clothing Exchange as a market leader in environmental retail of children's clothing & maternity wear. We work hard with our advisors to ensure they are given the best possible support, information and training to do well. Good customer service is key to our success and we pride ourselves on the quality of our advisors.

How The Clothing Exchange Agents Operate

A Clothing Exchange Agent would be expected to share some of the views of the company. It is highly unlikely that an agent would make a success of selling children's and maternity clothing if they themselves have not been parents or has no environmental ethics. Therefore it is a pre-requisite that all Agents are themselves parents and are passionate about contributing to a better world.

Clothing Exchange Retail Kit

To become an agent you will need to purchase a Clothing Exchange Retail Kit. We make use of bulk buying and negotiated discounts to provide really good value in this retail kit. The cost to you as an agent is £130 and consists of all the essentials that you will need in order to merchandise and promote your agency in a professional manner. To buy it at standard retail price it would cost over £170:

1 x double clothes rail 5' long on castors (retail value £38.50)
150 plastic children's coat hangers (retail value 45p each)
20 adult plastic coat hangers (retail value 45p each)
3 stackable storage boxes (retail value £10 each)

5 x The Clothing Exchange general promotion posters
(reorder cost = 50p each)

5 x The Clothing Exchange event promotion posters - for over printing with event details

(reorder cost 50p each)

100 x The Clothing Exchange information leaflet

(reorder cost = £5/100 leaflets)

50 x The Clothing Exchange party invitations

(reorder cost = 15p each)

100 x The Clothing Exchange business cards - for over printing with your own details

(reorder cost = £2.50/100)

We also operate a **buy back service** for the rails, hangers and storage boxes and will pay up to £100, depending on their condition, for these if you decide to give up your agency. All costs given include VAT at 17.5% where relevant.

Stock is supplied to you on a sale or return basis, you can order in items that suit your client base, so if most of your customers have young babies you might not wish to have clothes for older children, or vice versa. We are willing to provide you with stock on this basis up to a retail value £250. more can be provided but a holding deposit will be required. You will need to ensure that you have adequate insurance to cover this in the event of theft, fire or flood damage.



We provide a **detailed training manual** to give you the background knowledge to be successful in setting up your business as well as The Clothing Exchange service level agreements for customer service, marketing and financial management. Our agents have a support team who are also there to answer questions and provide advice and information.

Your Business

The Clothing Exchange Agents work on a self-employed basis in the area where they live and/or work. As an agent for The Clothing Exchange you would promote the products and ideals of the company locally through means that suit your responsibilities as a parent best. You are responsible for generating your own business and can make your Clothing Exchange agency as big or as small as you like depending on the time/commitment you have available.

- You could provide 'by appointment' private viewings at your own home or take a selection of items for viewing to someone else's home.
- You could attend hosted events at playgroups, antenatal and postnatal groups, and sell items at these. We recommend that a donation is also made to the group so that they can also use it as a fundraising activity.
- You could also organise hosted parties, encouraging friends and contacts to invite people to a coffee morning or a girl's night in, and attend with a good selection of items.
- You could attend table top sales, bootfairs or playdays

The agent sells the goods from their own stock to their customers and takes payment for the items at the point at which sale occurs (even if collection is at a latter point). All monies are regularly collected from the agents by The Clothing Exchange and then redistributed in accordance with the agreements.

The breakdown of this is...

30% to the original owner

20% to the Agent rising to 25%*

10% to the Host venue

**Once you have had the opportunity to establish your business and your sales reach £3,000 per annum, you will be promoted to a super agent and receive a further 5% commission on sales over the £3000 target.*

For example if you made £10,000 of clothing you would receive 20% on the first £3,000 and then 25% on the next £7,000, giving you a total profit of £1,350

Other bonus schemes may also run and could include, for example, awards for agent with most sales in a given time period or agent who makes the 10,000th sale.



You may not sell any children's clothing or maternity wear product other than those supplied by The Clothing Exchange without prior written consent of management.

Other perks

The Clothing Exchange is working with other local businesses to provide special arrangements for agents to obtain discounted products for their own use. More information and vouchers will be provided with your starter pack.

Marketing & Promotions

The Clothing Exchange will constantly be promoting the service that agents offer; using national, regional and local press contacts to raise overall awareness of the service.

The Clothing Exchange will also help market the service in a local area, using existing children and community related contacts.

Website enquiries will be redirected to the relevant agent and it is expected that these will be responded to in accordance with the guidelines layout in The Clothing Exchange customer service policy.

It is not expected that The Clothing Exchange agents should spend a lot of money on advertising, although you are free to do this if you wish, so long as adverts comply with The Clothing Exchange branding guidelines.

Word of mouth recommendation is by far the best way - a few happy customers will spread the word at no cost!

Some agents choose to offer an incentive to customers who recommend a friend to them - this is at the advisor's discretion.



Administration

We will supply you with all administrative paperwork free of charge; this includes:

- Receipts
- Supplier sheets
- Stock order forms
- Stock return forms
- Stock check forms

A stock update is issued every week via an email bulletin. You can order more stock for your customers

You will also be provided with a step by step 'how to...' guide that will take you through each of the processes. These have been kept as simple as possible to save both you and us time; but don't forget there is a support number to call if you get stuck.

Frequently Asked Questions

How Do I Promote Myself?

Most agents start with their local social circle of friends and mother & baby groups, doctors' surgeries and midwives and progress from there. Promotional material is available that can be distributed to midwives, health visitors, mother & baby groups, NCT groups, etc. Once fully established many advisors go on to work with local playgroups, community groups, family centres and nurseries.

Word of mouth is the most powerful advertising and good customer care is crucial to achieving this.

What Does The Clothing Exchange Do to Help Me?

Our support team are all able to answer any questions you have and give advice about what is available to help you promote your business. They will also organise various training courses throughout the year.

Most importantly we provide you with a good range of quality affordable stock. We manage the collection and distribution of the stock, the stock database and remuneration to suppliers.

We can provide you, at very low costs, leaflets, posters and promotional material for you to personalise with your own details and promote your own agency.

The Clothing Exchange will actively promote the service nationally, regionally and locally and will signpost enquiries to local agents. The Clothing Exchange will also promote your events on its website.

What Type of Experience Do I Need?

Agents come from all walks of life and have an amazing range of skills and experience. The most important is that you like people; being able to talk to anyone and confident enough to walk into a roomful of people you don't yet know will stand you in excellent stead as an agent. A reasonable level of numeracy and comfortable handling money will also be important as you will often have to add up in noisy, busy environments.

How Long Will It Take Me to Recoup the Cost of My Advisor Kit?

The Agents Start Up kit costs £130. In order to break even you will need to sell approximately £650 worth of goods. How quickly you do this will depend on how much time you spend on your agency, but you can reasonably expect to achieve this by attending between 3 and 6 hosted parties. Once you have recouped this cost, which is tax deductible, any money you earn will be a profit.

We also offer a buy back arrangement, so if you decide it's not for you we'll give you up to £100 back on the rails, hangers & storage boxes.

How Many Hours Do I Have to Work?

You can work as many or as few hours as suit you and your family's needs. Some advisors have other full or part time jobs. They work one/two days a week or just evenings/weekends. Others are full-time mums and they simply fit in nappy demos around whatever they are doing on a weekly basis.

How Much Will I Earn?

Remember, this business is yours to develop and grow as large as you like. Typical events or parties generate are £150-£250 per party meaning approximately £30-£50 commission per event, not bad for a couple of hours work! From here you can work out what you need to do to get the level of income that you personally want. Over time you will begin to receive repeat orders from customers as their children grow.

There is also the opportunity to sell other related products to existing customers such as toiletries, toys and potty training items. Many advisors also sell other products to their clients providing additional income. www.netmums.com is a good starting point to see what other business opportunities exist for you.

What Do I Do Next?

To become a Clothing Exchange Agent you will need a starter pack, which will be your property. The cost of the Starter Pack is £130 including delivery. If you wish to go ahead give me a call so we can arrange to meet up, in the meantime I will send a contract to be filled in and signed along with a couple of reference request forms.

I hope this information has given you some useful background into taking on an agency for The Clothing Exchange. If you have any further questions or would like more information, please don't hesitate to call me on 0845 680 6896 or email sara@theclothingexchange.co.uk

Looking forward to hearing from you.



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